

CHAPTER 6

Ongoing Operations

Although sites using independent study vary in size as well as kind of student populations served, certain factors are common to all operations. Those factors will be covered in this chapter.

A Student Recruitment

Student recruitment is an ongoing process because of attrition, graduation, and community needs. Established as well as new independent study providers may need to recruit students.

There are various methods and sources for bringing students into independent study. Recruitment efforts might fall into these general categories: (1) intradistrict information dissemination and staff development; and (2) publicity and information dissemination through established standard channels to parents and the community, such as newsletters to parents, newspaper publicity, features in available local media, and word of mouth. Many communities will prefer a more personalized presentation that offers the opportunity for question-and-answer periods to the use of more impersonal broadcast media.

To get the best results, design a recruitment plan based on local conditions and proven successful experience and, perhaps, some new and innovative

ideas that have worked well elsewhere. For example, you might announce the availability of the program on place mats at popular restaurants. Chambers of commerce, fraternal organizations, churches, service clubs, and public bulletin boards may be helpful in disseminating information. In many schools and smaller communities, news about independent study is communicated quickly (but not necessarily accurately) among students on a person-to-person basis. It is important to distribute accurate information through counselors, teachers, and others who advise and assist students.

To attract and retain good students in independent study, the following concepts should be emphasized in the recruitment materials:

1. Independent study helps the student to become a producer as well as a consumer of learning.
2. Independent study gives every student an opportunity to pursue a project in his or her own particular way.

Chart of District Resources, Strategies, and Procedures for Student Recruitment

<i>District resources</i>	<i>Recruitment strategies</i>	<i>Follow-up</i>	<i>Community resources</i>	<i>Possible procedures</i>	<i>Follow-up</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselors, psychologists, school nurses, secretaries, principals • Child welfare and attendance (school review boards and meetings) • Adult education • Multicultural/bilingual • Indian education • Special education • Gifted and talented coordinators • Public information office • Job Training Partnership Act programs (JTPA) • Foster youth • Home and hospital instruction • District preschool program • Abuse coordinator • Work Experience Coordinators/career centers ROP/C • District screening/placement committees • Outreach consultants • Students enrolled in independent study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyer • Brochure • Display posters • Article in district or county newsletter • Presentation at group meetings (faculty, PTA, school board) • Representation on district committees to give the program visibility and enjoy membership • Information phone calls about independent study • Personal visits • Listing in district's directory of alternatives • Obtain "drop" and "no-show" lists from other schools and follow up with a flyer • Slide or video presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send thank-you letters for all referrals (see end of chapter for sample) • Make confirming call to or contact with referring agency • Compile periodic attendance lists, honor rolls, or graduation announcements/mailed to appropriate resources • Maintain and update a list of outside agencies and send updated letters and new brochures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Development Department (E.D.D.) • Social welfare offices, county offices, (including Child Welfare and Attendance) • Community colleges • Libraries • Preschools • Community centers (such as YMCA) • Hospitals • Teen clinics • Drug and alcohol prevention/intervention centers • Social, civic, and fraternal groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyers (Some utility companies and welfare offices will include flyers in their bills.) Other sources for distribution of flyers: fast-food restaurants, shopping centers, laundromats, churches, libraries, YMCA, YWCA, recreation centers, unemployment offices, the lobbies of health clinics and theaters, and welfare, police, and social services departments • Brochures • Radio, newspaper, television, cable public service announcements • Mall display booth • County and state fair booth • Place mats at local fast-food restaurants • Slide or video presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send thank-you letters for all referrals (see end of chapter for sample). • Make confirming call to or contact with referring agency. • Compile periodic attendance lists, honor rolls, or graduation announcements/mailed to appropriate resources. • Maintain and update a list of outside agencies and send updated letters and new brochures.

3. The students develop their own styles and approaches to learning; each student learns in his or her preferred style.
4. Independent study allows students to pursue advanced subjects and topics at individualized rates of progress.
5. The student has an opportunity to work alone, with a teacher available for direct teaching as needed and for tutoring and resource assistance.
6. The independent study curriculum satisfies the requirements for high school graduation and college entrance.
7. The parents have an opportunity to be involved in planning, implementing, and teaching independent study.

See sample chart on page 6-3.

B County Office of Education Community School Referral Process

County offices of education are generally service-based agencies, not school districts with their own student populations determined by physical boundaries. Therefore, students participating in county community schools must be identified through a referral process.

1. Sources of referrals to county office of education community schools may come from, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. District administration
 - b. Child welfare and attendance
 - c. Probation—juvenile courts
 - d. Self-referral
 - e. Peers
 - f. Parents, guardians, caregivers
 - g. Counselors/school psychologist
2. County office of education community schools were created in 1971 as an option for “at-risk” youth. Under the direction of the county superintendent, the community school is authorized to serve the following pupils (*Education Code* Section 1981):
 - a. Expelled from a school district for any reason other than those specified in subdivision (a) or (c) of Section 48915.

- b. Referred to county community schools by a school district as a result of the recommendation by a school attendance review board or pupils whose school districts of attendance have, at the request of the pupil’s parent or guardian, approved the pupil’s enrollment in a county community school
- c. (1) Probation-referred pursuant to sections 300, 601, 602, and 654 of the *Welfare and Institutions Code*.
(2) On probation or parole and not in attendance in any school.
(3) Expelled for any of the reasons specified in subdivision (a) or (c) of Section 48915.
- d. Homeless children

C Use of Public Relations

Recruitment and public relations go hand in hand. Good public relations and recruitment involve receiving and giving information. Independent study educators will benefit from being involved with those agencies that service their independent study operations and students. By continually collecting and measuring the opinions of colleagues and the community about the independent study options available, the staff will be able to strengthen those options. Polls, surveys, and questionnaires are useful means of collecting needed information and establishing direct contacts with parents and other persons and groups in the community.

To be effective, recruitment and public relations programs must be honest, inclusive, understandable, sensible, dignified, comprehensive, and sensitive to the public served or to be served. Most people respond well to graphics. Statistics and other numerical data must be very clear and should be used sparingly. Printed and promotional materials should be short, sometimes humorous, and designed to catch the eye and hold the attention. In both written and spoken communications, short sentences, concrete terminology, and specific examples will get the best results. Have a communications or public relations expert—within or outside the organization—critique the planned program and publications so that the final products are as effective as possible.

D Screening and Assessment of Potential Students

It is important to screen and assess potential independent study students to determine that the students have the basic skills, maturity, and motivation to make independent study work. Equally important is that programs use safeguards against involuntary or inappropriate referrals of students to independent study (see Appendix A, *Education Code* Section 51747(c)(7), amended in 1992). *Education Code* Section 51746(b) provides that districts or county offices of education may require qualified personnel to assess the achievement, abilities, interests, aptitudes, and needs of participating pupils to determine the following:

- (1) Whether full-time independent study is the most appropriate alternative for the pupil being referred.
 - (2) If the answer to issue (1) is affirmative, the determination of the most appropriate individualized plan and resources to be made available to pupils enrolled in full-time independent study.
1. Before the initial screening session, the independent study administrator, counselor, or teacher-counselor must obtain and review the following information:
 - a. Past school records
 - b. Current achievement records, especially reading and mathematics scores, and competency test results
 - c. An individualized education program (IEP), if appropriate
 - d. The student's demonstration of an ability to communicate in English
 - e. Information supplied by a referral form
 - f. The results of other tests and assessments that may be available, especially if the student has received the services of a screening and counseling center

If the student's previous records are incomplete, some other diagnostic tools should be used to determine proper placement. Tests and other tools can yield valuable information for assessing the appropriateness of any proposed educational alternative. Many districts and county offices have tests available for review and use. In

selecting the appropriate instruments and devices, the reviewer should take into consideration the age and abilities of the student. Optimum conditions for the administration of assessment instruments include (1) an appropriate environment with adequate lighting and seating; (2) the option of morning or afternoon scheduling to give the student the optimum testing time; and (3) short testing periods with short breaks.

The initial assessment tools should determine the student's reading and mathematical skills. A student's writing sample also might be helpful. Some programs administer learning-style inventories, such as the *Keirsey-Bates Inventory* or the *Visual/Auditory/Tactile Preference Scale (V.A.T.)*. If additional assessment is needed in some areas, such as auditory or visual screening, district, county, or community agencies may be used.

2. At the initial screening session, the student and the parent, legal guardian, or caregiver (if the student is a minor) need to be present. Having the parent, legal guardian, or caregiver present is essential when screening potential elementary home study students.

Students and parents must have a clear understanding of what independent study is and how it operates. Students must be given an explanation of the conditions under which they will be able to accomplish tasks and the range of expectations about their achieving their goals. Students, parents, and school personnel must understand the conditions for learning and the kind of performance that will be expected of the student as an outcome of participation in independent study.

Allow time for assessment results to be shared with the student and parents, guardians, or caregivers. Certain testing requires prior parental permission, so permission forms should be available. There should be a policy about minimum required standards for placement which depend on the program's capabilities to service students with minimal skills.

3. Acceptance into independent study may be based on the following requirements:
 - a. Evidence that the pupil can work independently
 - b. Indication that the pupil will work to complete the assignments and meet necessary appointments
 - c. Availability of one or more certificated teachers with appropriate qualifications, including classroom teaching experience, and adequate time to supervise the student effectively
 - d. A written statement of educational objectives and the means of accomplishing and measuring progress toward the objectives

If the pupil's application is rejected and the pupil or parent appeals the rejection, the district will follow an established appeal process.

4. Once the assessment process is completed, the student can be accepted into independent study or referred to other county or district educational options that would better suit the student's needs. Examples of possible alternatives include special needs programs, other district alternative and continuation schools and programs, vocational rehabilitation, adult education programs, community college programs, and even university and college options.
5. Parents of prospective home study students should be thoroughly advised about the roles and responsibilities of parents, the school district or county office of education, and the student in a home education situation. They need to know what resources are available to them, what books and materials are to be used, where there is flexibility, what are the options in this strategy, and what are the responsibilities of the various parties to the independent study agreement. Parents and/or students may decide not to enter into home independent study after gaining a full understanding of these matters. See Chapter 7 for additional, detailed information.
6. A district may not accept a student on independent study who will not do as well in independent study as in a classroom.

Students must have the option of a classroom setting for a full program (not just one period or

part of a day) at the time independent study is made available. This option must be continuously available (not just at the time independent study is chosen) should the student decide to transfer from independent study.

E Career Counseling Interview

The purpose of the career counseling interview is to give students an opportunity to describe their current career situation and to inquire about career and vocational exploration, job placement services, job training programs, or vocational studies. The counselor, teacher, administrator, or Regional Occupational Program/On-campus Work Experience coordinator can inform the student of the services available within the independent study strategy or through referrals. For example, services may include career education coursework; career exploration opportunities; Work Experience Education (WEE); assessment of interests, aptitudes, and values; or state and federal government-funded job training programs. If appropriate, referrals can be made to other agencies, such as Job Corps, California Conservation Corps, and ROP/C.

F Enrollment and Registration

Once the district or county office determines that independent study is an appropriate placement for the student, the school of record should officially enroll and register the student. Every student engaged in independent study must be enrolled in a school that is part of a school district or county office of education, not just in a program (see Appendix A, *Education Code* Section 51748). Full-time independent study enrollment must be arranged with careful attention to the transfer of the student's attendance record to the separate register for independent study, without overlapping or double recording any attendance for concurrent attendance in an adult education course or Regional Occupational Program training which has no effect on a student's basic enrollment status.

Students in their eighteenth year have the right to remain in K–12 independent study until they are twenty-one. Students who drop can return to independent study at any time up to their nineteenth

birthday; after that, students must enroll in adult education to continue.

No ADA for independent study can be claimed for a student unless a written agreement is completed and in effect *Education Code* sections 46300.7 and 51747(c)(8)).

A supervising teacher must personally judge the time value of completed acceptable work (*Education Code* Section 51747.5(b); *California Code of Regulations, Title 5*, sections 11700 and 11703(b)(3)).

When students sign up for enrollment appointments, some or all of the following information must be noted: date of initial contact; student's name, address, phone number, age, grade, previous school; name of person who made the referral (if applicable); and appointment date and time. (The school should inform the students and parents, guardian, or caregiver of the education appointment meeting.) High school students should obtain immunization records and a transcript with all credits, including withdrawal grades, from the last school attended. The parents, guardians, or caregivers of elementary and intermediate students should bring a birth certificate, immunization records, and anything else that is required.

The teacher-counselor and clerical staff may use the following procedures during the enrollment process:

1. Present an overview supported by audiovisual materials and written descriptions, if possible, followed by student questions and answers.
2. Review assessment results.
3. Complete the student enrollment form, including emergency data and home language survey information.
4. Complete a "locator" or general information form needed at the site.
5. Obtain required health and immunization records, if appropriate.
6. Establish a student file, including the initiation of requests for a cumulative file or transcript (see sample letter at the end of this chapter).
7. Enter the student's information into the computer system.
8. Develop an individual educational/career plan for each student.

Establishing a waiting list generally is not an effective way to handle delays in placement when enrollment is full. A better way to handle this situation is to employ instructors on a part-time hourly basis to meet the needs until hiring another full-time staff member is appropriate.

G Informing Eighth Grade and High School Students of Graduation Requirements

It is important that grade eight and high school students entering independent study fully understand that they must fulfill the same district or county requirements for graduation as the students who attend comprehensive schools.

1. Requirements for completion of grade eight.

A student shall successfully complete the state-mandated kindergarten through grade eight course of study, and the United States History and Constitution examination, where required, and pass minimum proficiencies in reading, writing, and mathematics established by the district or county office of education.

2. Requirements for a high school diploma. The total number of credits necessary for graduation through independent study must be consistent with the district or county course of study, with electives designed to fit individual needs. Graduating students should pass the district proficiency (competency) or other required examinations.

District and county policies may not establish residency requirements for students before they are eligible for diplomas (*Education Code* Section 51411).

3. Evaluation of high school independent study records. The independent study staff should evaluate the student's transcript and check the records to determine the student's academic program with respect to graduation requirements. Each counselor or teacher should conduct a special review of credits with all grade twelve students at the beginning of each semester of the senior year. This process protects the student, the school, and, ultimately, the teacher-counselor who must advise parents of any student's inabil-

ity to meet any graduation requirements. All GED or CHSPE documents should be returned to the registrar for official entry on the transcript, and the transcript should be checked for errors. If any errors are found, the documents must be referred to the school of origin for correction.

4. *Diplomas issued.* Subsequent to the enactment in 1989 of SB 1563, every diploma should be the diploma of the school in which the student on independent study is enrolled. The practice of issuing to students who are graduating through independent study a diploma that bears only the name of the district is not accurate and may indicate noncompliance with *Education Code* Section 51748.

The related issue of the quality of the high school diploma raises the question of the school's accreditation status. This is a separate issue that may fall under existing district policy or that may require separate policy review in light of the numbers of students served. The precedent and procedures for pursuing accreditation have been established for "independent study high schools." (Contact Western Association of Schools and Colleges, telephone (650) 696-1060. See Chapter 13.)

H Orientation Program

Providing an orientation program at the close of the assessment process helps the student become involved immediately in independent study. The orientation class increases the student's chances of success because it increases the student's awareness of requirements and commitment to goals. In addition, no books or supplies need to be issued until the student has completed the orientation. Book loss is reduced because by the end of orientation everyone should be clear that the decision to enroll in independent study was appropriate.

Sample Outline of Orientation Program

1. Introduction/Welcome to Program
 - a. Roles of teachers and other staff
 - b. Roles and responsibilities of students
 - c. Roles of parents, guardians, or caregivers and others who may assist or facilitate

- d. Students' questions and answers about the program

2. Appointments

- a. Purpose and frequency
 - b. Importance of student's commitment
 - c. How to reschedule an appointment, if necessary

3. Initial Assignments (These materials may be used as the student's first work assignment.)

- a. Rules and expectations of school and student
 - b. Study skills
 - c. Learning styles
 - d. Time-management skills
 - e. Critical thinking
 - f. Short- and long-term goal-setting exercises
 - g. Awareness of community resources
 - h. Career assessment/exploration

4. Group Activities

- a. Bonding activities
 - b. Building self-esteem
 - c. Sharing concerns, expectations, frustrations
 - d. Reviewing required assignments

5. Orientation Evaluation

- a. Work reviewed, pass/fail grade, and credit issued by teacher
 - b. Determination whether further counseling is needed; possible referrals to in-district and community resources

6. Individual Activities

- a. Assigning teachers
 - b. Scheduling appointments

I Contacts Between Teachers and Students

There are several ways to handle the logistics of providing contacts between the responsible teacher and the student on independent study. One way is to use group experiences; for example, convening groups of students who need the same kind of instruction at a particular time and place or establishing suitably equipped study centers, staffed with volunteers (including retired teachers) and paid para-professional staff, in which students can study and find instructional assistance. Instruction of

students in groups is acceptable, but there is no formula for a ratio or frequency because the numbers would depend on the local conditions, such as (1) the presence of a number of students who need that instruction at a particular time; (2) the availability of suitable accommodations, equipment, and materials; (3) success in scheduling the event or series of meetings; (4) the instructional methods to be used; and (5) anything else in the situation that would ensure success. The number of group (tutorial or class) sessions and the number of participants should be determined by pertinent factors, not some arbitrary rule. For example, although hundreds of students might attend a lecture or experience a prepared audiovisual presentation, a limited number (probably less than 25) should participate in a cooperative learning or laboratory experience.

Independent study offers flexibility and opportunity for creativity. However, ADA must always be based on the student's effort and accomplishment—in a class or while working alone—not on the student's presence at any class or group meeting. Centers that are equipped with suitably programmed computers have been found in many instances to be highly effective supplements to or supports for human instruction. The obvious reasons for effectiveness include the continuous availability of the equipment and the unlimited opportunity for each student to achieve mastery of the skills at his or her own pace. The student's presence in a center without directly reporting to the responsible teacher, however, does not substitute for the reporting requirement. The teacher must have an opportunity to evaluate the student's progress in order to compute and record both academic progress and attendance—and to provide tutorial assistance and counsel as needed. Other competent staff at a center may assist in meeting the teacher's responsibilities; however, a designated learning center or study area must be staffed by appropriately trained personnel (see Appendix A, *Education Code* Section 51746(a)).

J Suggested Rules for Attendance

1. *Number of meetings between student and teacher.* It is important that the student has as much and as frequent contact as the student needs with his or her teacher and other staff who are available or who may be assigned to independent study. This requirement is clearly stated in *Education Code* Section 51747(c)(1). As important as the budget and staffing ratios are, they are not more important than meeting the student's needs and making sure that the written agreement specifies the frequency, duration, place, time, and manner of direct student-teacher contact in accordance with the official policy and procedures of the district or county office. (See Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of attendance.)
2. *Teacher contacts.* Encourage teachers to contact their students immediately if the students miss a scheduled appointment. This contact helps communicate to the student that the teacher is truly concerned about the student and about his or her progress in independent study. Other kinds of follow-up might be letters or home visits by the teacher or program liaison. The important point is that a caring adult makes contact with the student.
3. *Appointment cards.* Appointment cards have been used successfully to promote students' attendance. These cards are small enough to be kept in a wallet so that they are not easily lost. The cards act as a reminder of scheduled appointment times. The cards can have the site's telephone number on it so that if the student has a problem with his or her work assignments, he or she is able to contact the teacher. The student can also call and reschedule the appointment time if an emergency arises. Teachers should encourage students to schedule dental and medical appointments, job interviews, and other activities at times that will not interfere with independent study meeting times.
4. *Guidelines for dropping students from independent study.* The independent study agreement must contain a statement of the maximum number of assignments that a pupil may miss before an evaluation must be made to determine whether the pupil should be allowed to continue in independent study, as determined by board policy (see Appendix A, *Education Code* Section 51747(b)).
5. *Termination of enrollment and referrals.* If students are not being successful in independent study, they may choose another educational option. For example, students may return to a

regular classroom situation, to a continuation school, or to an adult education program, if appropriate. Administrators should be aware that students should not simply be “dropped” from independent study without minimum due process.

6. *Student noncompliance.* Some districts and counties have procedures for enforcing students’ attendance. The following sequence of steps may be used:
- An informal letter or telephone call from the supervisor of the student’s learning program (usually the teacher who signed the agreement) to the student and parent, guardian, or caregiver when applicable, suggesting a conference. In some districts friendly reminder postcards are used. Samples are included at the end of this chapter.
 - A formal letter from the program administrator advising the student, and parent, legal guardian, or caregiver if the student is a minor, of the legal issues and penalties for noncompliance. A conference with the administrator should be suggested. (See samples at the end of this chapter.)
 - A conference with the student (and parent, guardian, or caregiver if the student is a minor) and the teacher or administrator to discuss the problem and corrective action (see Appendix A, *Education Code* Section 51747(b)).
 - Referral to the appropriate Child Welfare and Attendance office. (This action might be triggered by lack of response to the formal letter.)
 - Referral to the appropriate SARB or Disciplinary Review Board. (This action might be triggered by no behavioral change following a response to the formal letter.)
 - Removal from the independent study option and placement in a more appropriate educational program by the screening committee or the administrator or as a result of the SARB decision. (This action would be the final step after others have been tried or in the case of some major act of noncompliant behavior.) At this time a classroom option must be offered.

Remember that students cannot be claimed for attendance purposes if they are not submitting work assignments. However, their names must remain on the formal attendance reporting documents until the students are formally dropped from independent study.

K Students’ Rights and Responsibilities

The rights and responsibilities of students enrolled in independent study are the same as they would be in the students’ regular school or program. (See the *Students’ Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* published by the California Department of Education in 1986.) Independent study is an instructional strategy, and change from one strategy to another has no effect on students’ rights and responsibilities except when physical location and other conditions activate different rules. None of these rule changes affects students’ rights and responsibilities under *Education Code* Section 51746 and the *California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 11701.5*.

Basically, the independent study student is entitled to the kindergarten-through-grade-twelve educational opportunity and services that the district or county office offers. These services include services funded from Migrant Education and other forms of compensatory education and opportunities to participate in cocurricular and extracurricular programs or activities, such as school sports and organizations. When independent study is within a school—as a school-within-a-school or as a separate or alternative school—the students’ access to services and supplemental educational opportunities is within the context of that particular school. When independent study is delivered as an educational option of a school, arrangements should be made to provide the independent study student with access to the services he or she would ordinarily be entitled to at the school of enrollment (*Education Code* Section 51746).

Similarly, students’ responsibilities are not waived by enrollment in independent study. Certain responsibilities may include observing the school rules at various school district sites in which the student might expect to appear.

L Combining Independent Study and Work Experience Education

When they qualify, independent study students may enroll in Work Experience Education (WEE). All state rules and regulations for Work Experience Education apply. The independent study strategy must meet those requirements. Attendance credit can be taken only in certain circumstances. Contact the Consultant for Work Experience Education, Standards and High School Development Division, at (916) 657-2446 for guidelines.

For detailed information about the subject of issuing work permits and the laws governing work experience, consult the *Work Permit Handbook for California Schools* (1998), published by the California Department of Education.

M Combining Independent Study and ROC/P

The flexibility of independent study makes it a natural partner with Regional Occupational Centers/

Programs (ROC/P). Students in comprehensive high schools are often prevented from taking ROC/P because of conflicting schedules, but independent study students do not have this problem.

Credits earned from ROC/P are usually considered high school credits and may count toward meeting the credit requirement for high school graduation. Usually, the credits are used to meet elective requirements, but there are some parts of ROC/P that may be used to meet a mathematics, social studies, science, or, in some cases, English requirement. For example, cosmetology courses have a required science unit. Students in most electronics-related courses do a lot of mathematics in the course. Many of the courses related to working with children (child-care occupations) have a unit on child growth and development. Research might find many other areas that could be used for credit other than elective credit, but district or county rules must be observed.